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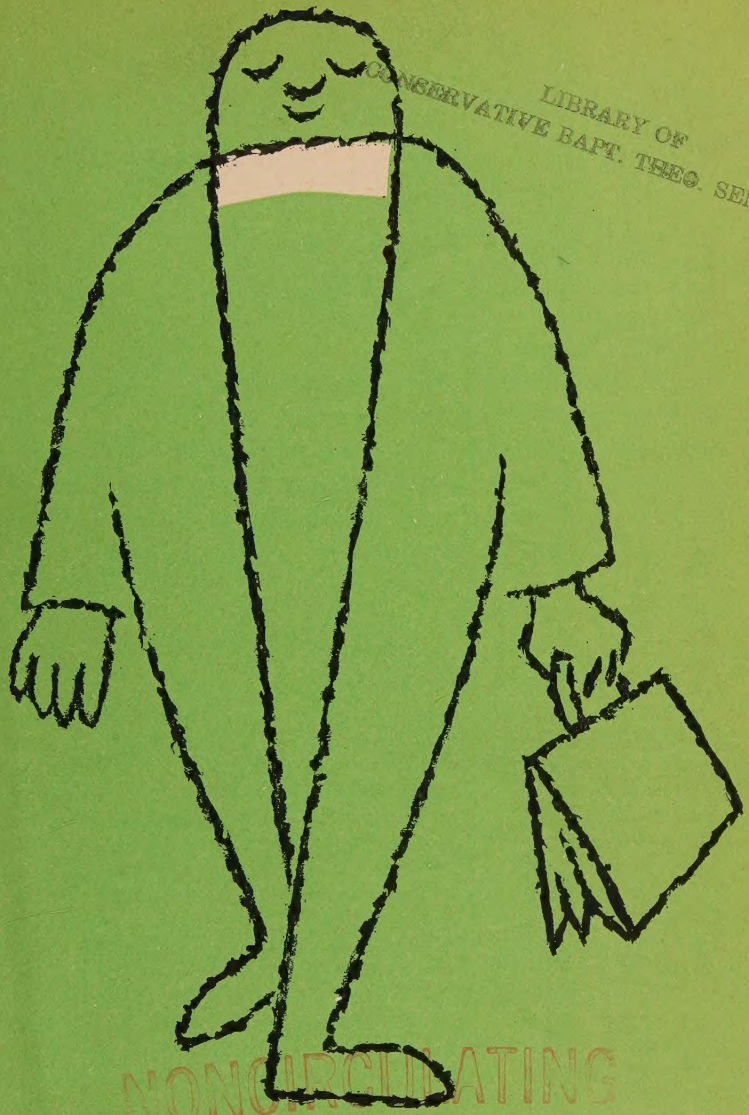

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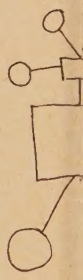

INTRODUCTION

The Beginning of the End of Ecumenical Docetism

In the play called *Harvey* the psychiatrist tells Elwood P. Doud, that he must face reality and Doud answers: "I wrestled with reality for forty years, Doc, and I am happy to state that I finally won out over it." The ecumenical movement has to deal with the reality of the Church and the churches and that reality, as every Faith and Order conference has made increasingly evident, includes both theological and "non-theological" factors. It is a docetic delusion to suppose that ecumenically one can "win out" over the sociological flesh-and-blood of inter-church relations. And institutionalism is one part of the churchly reality which incarnates the sin of division, just as it may embody the realization of unity.

Dean Walter Muelder of Boston, Chairman of the Faith and Order Study Commission on Institutionalism, said to the World Council Central Committee in 1955 in proposing that special attention be given this subject, that the churches could no longer hide from themselves or from others the "sociological commonplace that religion in its organizational aspects is marked by the same human problems as social life in general". Christian disunity is a scandal. But it is a scandal compounded when essentially "human problems" are docetically disguised in the respectable garments of dogmatic and confessional rationalization. A truly incarnational ecumenism must come to terms with the wholeness of church existence and the present Institutionalism Study is performing the notable service of "unmasking" for the churches their true natures. It is, as the Summary Report says, applying "the Chalcedonian formula to the issue" of church unity.

The following materials from the work of this Faith and Order Study Commission are drawn from papers contributed by Dr. Berndt Gustafsson of Lund, Dr. Joseph L. Allen of Dallas, Dr. W. S. F. Pickering of Winnipeg, Dr. J. Milton Yinger of Oberlin, and from the reports of the Commission prepared by Dean Walter Muelder and Dr. Nils Ehrenström, the officers.

KEITH R. BRIDSTON.

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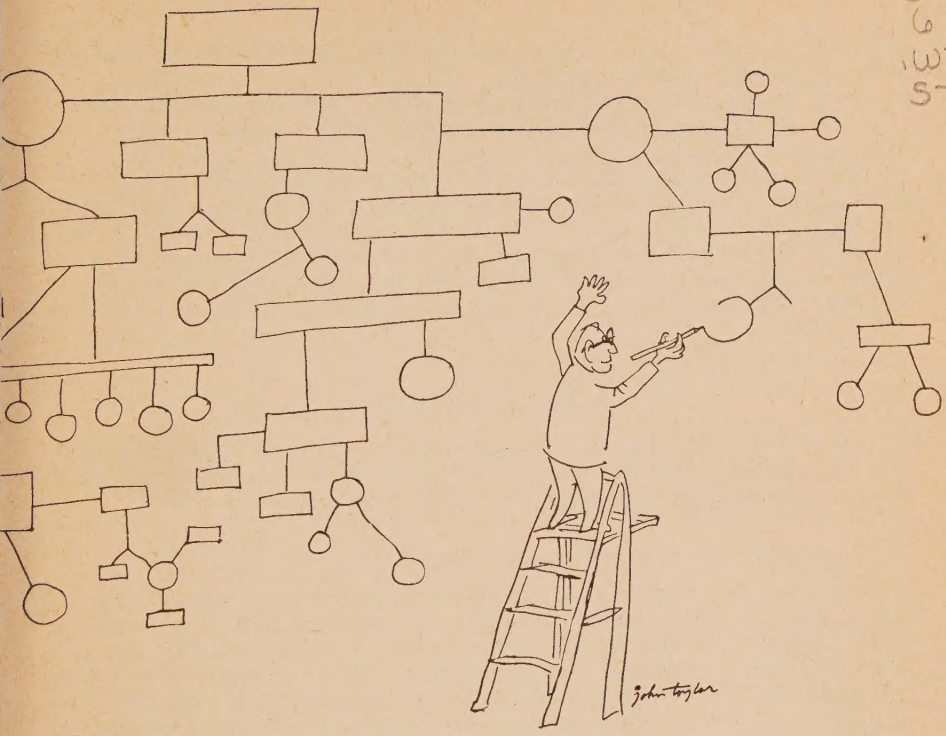


The Issues of INSTITUTIONALISM

A Summary Report

I. Programme Developments

In 1955 the Faith and Order Working Committee decided to establish a Study Commission on Institutionalism, with the following terms of reference:

"To make a study of Institutionalism as it affects all churches, and in particular:

1. The self-criticism by which they may see their own structures sociologically as well as theologically;

2. The relations both positive and negative of the churches to each other in the ecumenical conversation ;
3. The pattern of church relations which is finding expression in the World Council of Churches as an institution."

The Commission has pursued its work by means of correspondence, exchange and criticism of papers, and two small meetings held in 1957 and 1958. Because of the unexplored nature of the subject, both meetings spent considerable time in defining the objectives and scope of the commission and in discussing basic issues. A statement produced by the 1958 meeting lists various projects now in process which fall into two categories — analysis of basic issues and illustrative case studies.

II. Issues under debate

It is as yet too early to expect any consensus on substantive matters, for there is still no real agreement even on the definition of terms. A systematic summary is given, grouping the issues raised around certain problem centres.

A. *A sociological and/or theological approach?*

One of the main problems with which the Commission is faced is whether its approach to the subject should be sociological, theological, or both. The task is complicated by the fact that the subject matter is both a sociological and a theological reality, and could be studied from either viewpoint. This means that alternative conceptions of the Commission's task can and do exist. The task of the Commission is to study institutional factors in the life of the churches as they affect unity and disunity ; and it has taken the view that both "church" and "institution" must be studied from the perspective of both the theologian and of the sociologist. This interdisciplinary approach applies, one might say, the Chalcedonian formula to the issue — the two approaches are inseparable yet not to be confused. Many questions have been raised in the meetings which will call for further elucidation : Can theological and sociological analysis be applied to the whole Church, or is the Church (or a particular dimension of it) a divine mystery inaccessible to such analysis ? Is the type of investigation used in the study of social institutions precluded ? Do theologians and sociologists share the same preconceptions of the object "church", or do they, because of different modes of thinking, visualize different objects ? What consequences does this have for their conclusions ? Where is the "normative pattern" of the Church which can provide theological and ecclesiological criteria for such an enquiry ? Are there areas in which sociological criteria are primary ?

B. *Definitions*

In outlining the scope of its assignment, the Commission has been blocked by the absence of agreed definitions. This relates to "church" as well as to "institution".

With regard to "church", the diversity of meanings is notorious, and though Faith and Order has done much work in this direction over the years, no common mind has been reached regarding the essential nature and marks of the Church.

These theological divergencies are complicated by divergence between theological and sociological approaches, perceiving different objects or different aspects of the same object. To break this vicious circle and obtain a starting point for the Commission's work, several procedures have been suggested :

(a) To follow the lead of the Faith and Order Commission on "Christ and the Church" and attempt to return to the unadulterated and unified testimony of primitive Christianity, and examine the institutional elements of this normative pattern.

It has been asked whether this testimony (provided it really is unified, which is debatable) constitutes a commonly accepted norm ? Can the apostolic church alone be accepted as furnishing the normative image for all subsequent history ? To what date can the normative age be extended ?

(b) To make a comparative study of dominant views about the Church and accept their common denominator as a platform on which to work — whether this be acceptable to the theological purists or not.

It was pointed out that precisely this procedure had led Faith and Order to an impasse. In any case, it would be too loose to build on.

(c) To analyze the role of institution as conceived by a number of individual denominations, and then proceed from a synthesis of their conceptions of institution in the Church.

(d) To abandon completely the theological search for an acceptable definition of the Church, and start with the Church as an "objective" religious group, as empirical sociology sees it.

This proposal, too, was discarded, for sociologists were not known to be more united than theologians, and the assumptions underlying their definitions of the Church were subject to severe criticism. Above all, to start from such a premise would preclude any possibility of a theological evaluation of "good" and "bad" institutional features in the churches.

The definition of "institution" has proved equally baffling. It was hoped when the Commission was set up that by concentrating on institutional factors alone it would be possible to produce more concrete results than would a general inquiry into "non-theological factors". But "institution" has been found to be so closely intertwined with other manifestations of the life of the Church that it has proved well-nigh impossible to isolate it for analysis. A further difficulty is the lack of commonly accepted definitions of the word in sociology itself. For its own task the Commission has, for the time being, contented itself with some descriptive limitations of the subject matter. "Institutionalism" is sometimes interpreted in a pejorative sense, suggesting a perversion of the true function of institution ; and to obviate this it has been expressly stated that the Commission intends to use the term in an ambivalent sense, including both good and bad features of institutional life.

C. *The task of the Commission*

For the proper interpretation of the Commission's terms of reference, the following points of definition and limitation have been agreed :

1) The Commission emphasizes that its main concern is focused on the unity of the Church rather than on a generalized study of institutional factors. Owing, however, to the novelty of the subject, much in the way of potentially relevant data has to be considered, in order to discover where ecumenical significance lies.

2) The Commission has felt the need to limit its objective to the extent of concentrating, at least for some time, on the organizational aspects of institutionalism (as distinct from e.g. credal and liturgical aspects).

3) As part of an integrated Faith and Order programme, the Commission cannot pursue its inquiries in isolation, and thus close co-operation and exchange with other Faith and Order study commissions are imperative.

D. *Substantive Issues*

Among the recurring themes dealt with by the Study Commission during the course of its work are the following :

1. *The Church as Koinonia and as Institution*

This is the basal problem facing the Commission. Without a clear grasp of this interrelationship, it cannot construct any valid criteria for analyzing and evaluating institutional factors. Unfortunately, as the Commission has realized, it is also one of the most confused and controversial issues in contemporary Protestant thought. The circumstance, moreover, which has already been referred to, that the theological and sociological definitions of the two terms are variables, multiplies the range of variability of possible answers. Little wonder therefore that the Commission has not yet been able to attain any substantial clarification of the matter. It is exploring some promising avenues — no more.

In the first place, the Commission is seeking to develop the truth that koinonia and institution are distinct yet inseparable. It seeks to find a passageway between the scylla of a spiritualizing ultra-Protestantism, which interprets the church in exclusive personalistic terms, denouncing institutionalization as a "fall", and on the other hand the charybdis of an ultra-Catholic legalism, which makes koinonia and institution indistinguishable.

Within this general formulation of the problem, the discussion has shown a wide variety of viewpoints and emphases. An Anglican participant at the first meeting voiced the suspicion that the group had a subconscious anti-institutional bias. But if there were any evidence of such a bias in the discussion, it was clearly transcended in the agreed statements issued by both meetings. The 1958 meeting states, speaking of the positive values of institutions : "The Commission agrees that every Christian group has persistent patterns of common life, and in at least this minimum sense is an institution. Institutional forms often have positive and constructive value for a particular church and for the whole of God's people. The common life is dependent upon their proper function."

At both meetings the Commission had before it papers on the subject by its German and Swedish members which provoked a vigorous discussion. Continental Protestantism, and especially its Lutheran wing, has long been deeply influenced by Rudolph Sohm and his spiritualization of the church. A countermovement is now on foot, seeking to rehabilitate institution and law as organic elements of the structure of the church. The papers just mentioned reflect this position — especially the German one with its insistence that institution is not merely a human social phenomenon, as a secularized sociology contends, but an ontological datum ; the institutional order of the church is a God-given reality which is the ground and the norm of the varied historical forms in which it is embodied.

The thesis met with both approval and rebuttal. Is it compatible with Christian personalism to regard institutions as part of the essential structure of the Church ? Does not the history of New Testament Christianity reveal an initial period of charismatic functions, which only later were stereotyped into institutional offices ? Was the community around Jesus less "church" because it lacked some of the structures which emerged in later ages as responses to new needs ? And what is gained, for the purposes of our Commission, by trying to develop a Christian ontology of social institutions ? Does not such an approach make a dialogue between theology and sociology impossible ?

This debate led inevitably to a further issue. How can we discuss institutional factors normatively ? Granting (which not all were prepared to do) that institution is an integral part of the divine-human nature of the church — what then are the principles of discrimination *(a)* between divine and human elements, *(b)* between necessary constants and historical variants, and *(c)* between "good" and "bad" institutional features ? At the second meeting in 1958 the discussion of this point was brought a step forward by relating institution to the classical distinction between the order and the organization of the church. The church, it was said, is both koinonia and institution in the sense that it is "an ordered structure which at all times and in all places serves as the means by which God constitutes the Church as a Church". This order is the norm by which to judge the varied organizational and administrative forms of the churches in history.

How then can we distinguish between this constant, God-given order and its diversified historical embodiments ? And what constitutes that order ? Two contrasting answers were suggested : *(a)* Going back to the origins of the Christian church, we can discern this order in a stage of relative purity, unaffected by historical accretions and distortions ; *(b)* The double principle of discrimination is to be found in church order as a complex of essential functions and in the apostolicity of the church.

2. *Inconsistencies and Incompatibilities in the Institutional Life of the Churches*

The discussions and documents of the Commission have supplied a wealth of data for a sociological analysis of the institutional life of the churches — on bureaucracy, routinization, the divorce between grass roots and administrative top, power struggles, discrepancies between denominational self-image and institutional operations, the interaction of institutionalizing agents, environmental influences, the self-perpetuating tendency of hallowed institutions, and so forth.

Many of these observations illustrate a general feature which suggests a fruitful line of further investigation — the inconsistencies and incompatibilities in the institutional life of the churches. These are of many different kinds. Within each denomination there are constant and flagrant discrepancies between institutional patterns and the purpose or "order" they are intended to serve. An Episcopal church may be Congregationalist in policy. The inertial guidance-systems of established institutions reject or absorb the institutionalizing dynamics of new religious insights and pioneering ventures.

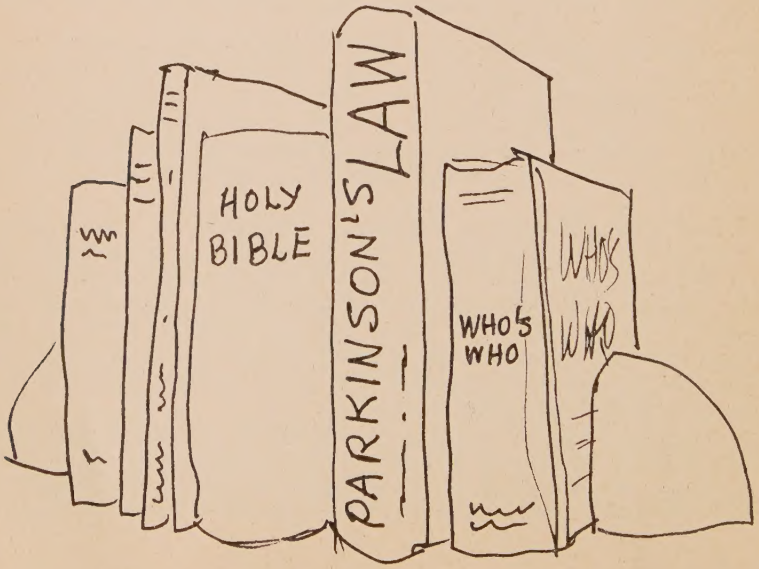
Interdenominational tensions and estrangements are caused not only by incompatibilities of temper and doctrine but also, to a far greater extent than has been commonly recognized, by incompatibilities of institutional structure and behaviour. The case studies undertaken by the Commission furnish many striking,

and sometimes tragicomic, illustrations of this fact... It would seem that — in regard to most Protestant communions today — such institutional incompatibilities, and not doctrinal differences, form the chief obstacle to a rapprochement. Negotiations have failed for the simple reason that delegates were not sufficiently aware of the institutional behaviour patterns of the other denomination to know what was "protocol" in a given situation. Clashes between ecclesiastical rank systems in organizing processions have more than once provoked denominational aggressiveness in ecumenical conferences.

The attention of the Commission has also been drawn to other seemingly innocuous discrepancies which nonetheless obstruct interdenominational co-operation at local, national and global levels — such as the decisive influence of differences in church calendar, long range programming, and overlapping denominational jurisdiction.

3. *Ecumenical Institutionalization*

These exploratory excursions in various directions over the past few years have confronted the Commission with a final, immensely challenging problem — that of ecumenical institutionalization. What is meant is this. The existing institutional structures of the churches, of all churches, are now obsolescent insomuch as they reflect the conditions of a pre-ecumenical age. Whether coherent or fragmented, whether good or bad, those historical structures now impede the advancing ecumenical reformation of Christendom. Transversal movements of renewal are overleaping denominational boundaries, new ecumenical vitalities are bursting forth, which demand appropriate institutional expression. This demand is not met by simply grafting ecumenical institutions onto pre-ecumenical structures as is the case today in local, national, and world councils. It requires processes of institutionalization which progressively embody the one universal koinonia.



The Pentecostal Movement and the Swedish Baptist Union 1907-1920

In Sweden — as in most countries — the Pentecostal Movement did not start as a separate church, but existed for some time among various groups not only within the Swedish Baptist Union but also within other Churches, such as the Methodist Church and the Swedish Mission Covenant Church, which favoured baptism by the Holy Spirit. Only gradually did the Pentecostal Movement begin to develop into a movement entirely independent of the older churches, all the time without any characteristics of an organized church. The struggles that arose during the early years of the movement were, however, mainly with the Swedish Baptist Union and its organizations, and it was only here that a real schism developed.

During this period from 1907 to 1919 only local schisms occurred, and it was not until the latter year that a formal break was made with the Baptist Union. While the immediate cause of the breach was the question of open or closed communion, essentially the conflict was one between two quite different types of organization, one formal, and one more informal.

Behind the two types of organization lay two different social cultures. Behind the formal organization within the Baptist Union with its firm associational democracy we find the society of the popular movements. The Baptist Congregations had grown up during the great epoch of social change, when all the popular movements started and took their part in the shaping of the new Swedish society. The rural Sweden was changed into an urban and industrial Sweden. The sociological roots of the Baptist movement in Sweden are to a large extent to be sought in the breakdown of the old natural primary groups, above all the village and the neighbourhood. As a consequence of this, several groups found a compensation for what they had lost in new movements of an associational type, where secondary groups were prevailing.

The organizational pattern of the Baptist Union was the associational, and all the Baptist Movement was thus strongly institutionalized by the new emerging society and the Baptists also gave their contribution to the institutionalization of the new society. The new social situation and the American heritage compelled the Swedish Baptists to take their way along the line of a voluntary association.

This we can find not least in the forms of church government. The Baptist Union government was formally and strongly democratic. Whereas the Salvation Army and the Methodist Church had a governmental order that was not thoroughly democratic, the features of privileged government were totally absent in the Baptist Union.

A popular movement, an organization embracing the whole country was built up, with districts and district associations as intermediate organizations between the national Board and the local congregations, but with a more strongly formal order than in the U.S.A. In particular, the Baptists were here representatives of a fundamental political liberalism, equivalent to the firm democracy and the principle of self-government within their own church. This institutionalization of the Baptist Union by this new society of the popular movements can be illustrated by many of the utterances of leading Baptists of the time.

It came to be established that congregations could not be founded without the approval of the district board. Trouble was thus caused when new Pentecostal-minded Baptist congregations began to be founded without such approval having been sought, as being contrary to the established institutional practice. The district board as an administrative top was considered by the Pentecostal awakening as a narrow institutionalism that smothered all freedom and threatened to bind the spiritual life with administrative strait-jackets.

Essentially it was a conflict between different social ideals, determined by quite different social situations. For the Baptists it was necessary to find an assured and respectable position in the newly-emerging democratic society, their conflict being seen against a background of hard struggle for religious freedom and full rights of citizenship in Swedish society. For the Pentecostal Movement, on the other hand, it was vital to find administrative patterns that were shelters against this over-organized and administrated society which they saw as a threat to independence. The Pentecostal Movement was above all institutionalized by groups that revolted against the administrated society, and instead of that sought for intimate personal contacts, while at the same time being firmly rooted in older cultural patterns.

The protest of the Pentecostalists took several different forms ; in particular the complete rejection of the associational principle, including such manifestations as youth associations, in favour of the single indivisible group, the congregation. In this fundamental aversion to the associational pattern, the Pentecostal Movement was seen to be protesting against the institutionalization of the religious denominations by the new society. Instead of the associationalities between the members, they took the purely spiritual solidarity and the intense fellowship in the congregation as the ties that could bind the faithful together. Thus was established a system based on the idea of the religious large family, a completely new form of adjustment to the new society with its often impersonal and secondary relationships.

Sometimes the protest against organized religion lapsed into anarchy and total absence of organization in any form. A Pentecostal congregation in Gothenburg abandoned the institution of deacons and elders, but Lewi Pethrus, the leader

of the movement and editor of the journal *Evangelii Härold*, urged that although the Bible taught that they should be free from all associations other than the congregation, they should not therefore reject a biblical order of congregation.

The Pentecostalists' attitude also led them to reject any form of organized membership records other than on a purely congregational basis, for fear of regarding people as mere numbers rather than as individuals. They also reacted against the formal order of service found in the older churches, which, though not liturgical in form had by custom and tradition come to assume a set pattern.

A conflict which arose in 1912 and 1913 between the Philadelphia Congregation in Stockholm and the District Association of the Swedish Baptist Union greatly influenced subsequent relationships between the Pentecostal Movement and the Baptist Union. Although it arose over the question of open communion practised by the Philadelphia Congregation, it seems clear from the progress of the dispute that the differing attitudes of the two bodies to the question of organization was the chief cause of trouble and misunderstanding. The Stockholm District Association tended to pursue the matter in a more formal and impersonal way than the Pentecostal congregation, and this led each side to misinterpret the attitude of the other. The Pentecostalists felt that the Baptist Union's insistence on closed communion laid too great a stress on formal membership of a congregation, while the Baptist Union regarded the Pentecostalist position as vague and inimical to good order and discipline. Although there were here traces of theological differences, nevertheless it was essentially a conflict between two differing attitudes to organization, and a breach finally came when in 1913 the District Association decided that the Philadelphia Congregation should be separated from its membership. It is difficult to suppress the impression that the Stockholm District Association tried to *administrate* the matter in the direction of a solution, whereas the Philadelphia Congregation hoped for an *informal* settlement without excommunication.

Hitherto, the Pentecostal Movement had to a certain extent been interdenominational and free from all church bonds, but now the question of its denominational position became a problem. The steadfast refusal of the Movement to consider itself a church or denomination was yet another manifestation of its sociological background. The Swedish Pentecostalists protested when some of their Swedish American brethren planned to create a formal council to function as a missionary board, since this might potentially become an authority with rights over the local congregations, thus prejudicing their spiritual freedom. For similar reasons they could not agree to any supervisory board of preachers.

In 1919, however, the Swedish Baptist Union agreed to extend communion to members of Baptist congregations outwith the union, thus removing the cause for which the Philadelphia Congregation had been excommunicated. Nevertheless, Pentecostal congregations were still urged by Pethrus to continue the way of freedom they had established, since there was still the question of the district associations which they could not accept.

Three reasons were given against denominational organization — that it could not be supported from New Testament evidence, that denominations and churches

were not merely missionary organizations but pressure groups, and that the organizations obstructed the work of the Holy Spirit in the world. All these indicate the background of protest against the organization of religious life, and in particular the objection to "pressure groups" showed a rejection of the way in which the denominations appeared to reflect their members' confidence and assurance in the newly emerging democratic society.

While mostly drawing groups of people from among the more organized denominations, the Pentecostal Movement also appealed to individuals who were drawn to it as a consequence of the formalization of relationships found within their own churches. The majority, however, came from the Swedish Baptist Union, and were largely people of an agrarian background, little affected by the new industrial and urban society. At first there was a slight tension between those of a Baptist background and those from other denominations in which infant baptism was more usual; but soon the practice of believer's baptism became general among the Pentecostalists.

In rejecting the new organized, democratic pattern of life, the Pentecostalists protested also against the new culture and its expression in the various habits connected with the new patterns of urban life and the higher standard of living. Their protests in particular were directed against new dress fashions and hair styles, smoking, the theatre, cinema and sports, which they regarded as sinful; and they strongly criticized the older denominations which seemed to them to lack discipline and to make too many concessions to the new cultural behaviour. Pentecostalists were thus required to break off completely their ties with "the world", which they equated with the new age and the new kind of life to be found in the larger towns. Stockholm, the capital, with its public entertainments, restaurants, etc., was particularly regarded as a classic example of worldliness and vice. While this was a typical kind of reaction to be found in such movements, it nevertheless showed clearly how the Pentecostal Movement was institutionalized by groups rooted in the older agrarian culture.

Thus essentially the break between the Pentecostal Movement and the Swedish Baptist Union sociologically must be considered as emanating from differences concerning the process of institutionalization. The Swedish Baptist Union had become more and more institutionalized by the growing and expanding society of popular movements and modern organizations, the Pentecostal Movement, on the contrary, by marginal groups that to a large extent were outside this new society or had experienced it as cold and impersonal.

In situations of this type, when churches or denominations define eventual conflicts in quite different ways, it seems as if constant personal, informal and positive contacts would be a more constructive ecumenical strategy than formal conferences. While conferences are important, and can be very helpful, the real problem is how to avoid conflicts by preventive measures. Informal and stable personal contacts *within* the denominations and churches — particularly between administrative heads and local congregations — can have this preventive importance and should be encouraged, although at the present moment it is difficult, for lack of the necessary knowledge, to make suggestions as to how this might be done.

Institutional Factors Affecting Methodist Union in the United States of America

In 1939 three branches of American Methodism united, bringing together over 8 million members, after about a century of division and several decades of of negotiations. Methodist union offers an important case study from the point of view of the Faith and Order Study Commission on Institutionalism, for it provides an instance in which institutional questions stood out strongly, both in the original divisions and in the negotiations which led to reunion.

Historical Background

At the time of union two of the three bodies were considerably larger than the third. The *Methodist Episcopal Church* had about 4½ million members in the U.S.A., plus a further ½ million overseas; the *Methodist Episcopal Church, South* was a little smaller, with a membership of just under 3 million in the United States, and just under 25,000 overseas; while the third negotiating church, the *Methodist Protestant Church*, had just under 150,000 members. This discrepancy in size, along with other considerations, explains why the negotiations centred their attention mainly on relations between the two larger groups.

Geographically, the two larger bodies occupied mainly different areas of the United States, whereas the third overlapped both of the others. With some exceptions, the Methodist Episcopal Church was strongest in the north and west of the U.S.A., while the majority of the members of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South were found in the area of the eleven former Confederate States. The Methodist Protestant Church, strongest in Maryland and the eastern states had an influence which extended both north and south and thus was not completely identified with the regional interests of either of the other two groups.

All three of the uniting communions originated in the same organization, the Methodist Episcopal Church. In their common past was the tradition of church polity which developed under the leadership of Francis Asbury after the Christmas Conference of 1784. Exactly what was (or should be) the nature of that polity was a matter of debate, and it was out of this controversy that the Methodist Protestant Church eventually originated in 1830.

From time to time during the early part of the 19th century protests were raised against the existing form of church government, attacks being mainly directed against the power of the bishops and in favour of more democratic procedure, including lay representation. A first secession occurred in 1792; another controversy arose in 1820, and further developments between 1824 and 1828 drove others of the reforming element to withdraw from the church to form the Methodist Protestant Church, which held its first conference in 1830. It has been estimated that about 5,000 members withdrew, and by 1834 a membership of over 26,000 was recorded. The new church was based on a presbyterial polity, with a president instead of bishops, and with equal representation for laity and clergy in church government.

In the years following 1830 the growing national tension over slavery was reflected in the churches. Although in 1836 the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church condemned abolitionism by a large majority, in the following years some local conferences attempted to introduce abolition petitions which were prevented by the presiding bishops; and by 1844 the issue could no longer be avoided. At the General Conference it was moved that a certain bishop in Georgia who was legally a slave-holder should be debarred from office so long as this "impediment" remained. The question then arose as to whether the General Conference had the power to discipline a bishop in this way, or whether the bishop was superior in power to the General Conference. Although these problems remained unsolved, the resolution was finally approved by a large majority; the northern delegates voting in favour and the southern delegates against. In protest the latter prepared a plan of separation which provided that annual conferences in the slaveholding states could unite in a separate connection, and on this basis the Methodist Episcopal Church, South was formed in 1845.

Although the division had arisen out of the slavery issue, the specific act which occasioned the division involved the institutional question of the relative power of the General Conference and a bishop. Had the issue of slavery not come to a head in this question, however, it would probably have arisen soon in some other way. Unlike the Methodist Protestant schism, this division left two connections in separate geographical areas, reflecting for the most part the division between free and slaveholding states. Despite debates over the bishop's prerogatives, both connections maintained an episcopal polity, though with slight variations in form.

Reunion and Institutionalism

As a result of the bitterness caused by the schism, the two churches remained estranged for over twenty years, and it was not until after the Civil War and the re-establishment of national union that communication between them was resumed. The main reason for the resumption of relations was the strong sense

of a common tradition which was shared by the two branches of Episcopal Methodism and also to a large extent (apart from greater differences in polity) by the Methodist Protestant Church. Without this awareness of a shared tradition it is unlikely that any efforts towards union would have been made.

Problems of polity growing out of various institutionalized patterns and interests played the central role in the long course of negotiations between the three communions. At virtually no point in the discussions was doctrine a divisive matter. The negotiators assumed so thoroughly that the three bodies held the same doctrinal position that they seldom even needed to mention the subject. The divisive issues grew rather out of differing institutionalized patterns of behaviour.

The major institutional issues which were resolved on the way to union were as follows : lay representation ; interpretation of the divisions and acceptance of the legitimacy of each branch ; protection of minority rights ; the locus of authority in the church government ; and the organization of the church's Negro membership. The first of these problems was the main issue for the Methodist Protestants ; the remaining concerns were central to the negotiations between the two episcopally-governed branches.

Before the Methodist Protestant split in 1830 the reformers had demanded equal representation for the laity, a goal which, like their protest against arbitrary episcopal power, seems to have reflected the demands for extension of democracy in United States government at that time. Not long afterwards the Methodist Episcopal branches began to grant some degree of representation to laymen, and it was this which brought about the first overtures to be made to the Methodist Protestant Church in 1866. The churches still differed too strongly on other institutional matters, however, for any negotiations to be successful.

When in 1911 discussions were resumed this question of lay representation was still foremost among the demands of the Methodist Protestants; and although in the years that followed they did not take official part in the discussions, the two episcopal bodies in their plans began to grant within some limits the principle of lay representation, so that when the three parties returned to common negotiations in the 1930's the principle was firmly established.

The issues separating the episcopal branches of Methodism were far thornier and took much longer to settle. Involved in the question of the nature of the split was the problem of whether the Church, South had seceded from the parent body or whether the General Conference of 1844 had divided the church when it approved the Plan of Separation. The litigation which ensued was settled by the Supreme Court ruling in 1854 that the Plan of Separation did in fact divide the church ; and thus as far as the civil law was concerned there had been no secession — the church had divided itself. It was, however, not until the Cape

May Conference in 1876 which declared the fraternity and equality of the two churches that the northern branch came to accept fully this interpretation. The agreement was a significant one for the negotiations, since it meant that from then on the churches negotiated as equals, and thus the method of union logically became reorganization rather than the return of one to the other.

Interpretation of the division also involved discussion of the cause of the split — whether the slavery question was the cause or only the occasion of the schism. This question was never really solved. In the course of negotiation the two problems — concern over the power of the General Conference, and the racial question — proved to be inseparable, conditions being such that to raise one meant also raising the other.

Race, Minority Rights, and the Problem of Authority

Both southern and northern branches were agreed that union should come about by reorganization of the church government and not by absorption of one communion into the other. The southern church, however, wanted a union which would allow the southern minority an explicit constitutional protection for its regional interests, so that they would not be subject to the direction of non-southerners in matters of specifically regional concern. The northern Methodists, however, while willing to grant some protection of minority regional interests, did not want to do so to the extent of continuing two or more denominations under the appearance of union ; and wanted the General Conference to be the chief policy body of the church, whatever minority rights might be recognized. It is interesting to note that the Methodist Protestants, though a far smaller minority than the Southern Methodists, were not concerned with any measures to protect their own rights after union. The concern over minority rights grew out of the special situation of the southern Methodists ; it is not a concern inherent in minority status.

The southern commissioners continued throughout the negotiations to demand protection of their rights, a demand which found its main expression in the idea of the jurisdictional (regional) conference. From 1911 onwards, a prerequisite for any plan of union the South would even consider was some kind of regional conference with its own prescribed powers over against the General Conference. Without some plan of that kind the Methodist Episcopal Church, South would not have approved the union in 1939. The northern branch, however, periodically argued that the jurisdictional system would make the General Conference unduly weak.

The southern concern for the protection of its own regional interests is reflected also in other institutional changes which appeared in the Plan of Union. Southerners supported the formation of a judicial council partly out of the conviction that

the General Conference should not be allowed to pass judgment on the constitutionality of its own actions, since such power might have threatened a minority's constitutional safeguards. Similarly, it was the insistence of the southern commissioners which caused certain changes to be made regarding the election of bishops and their power over annual conferences.

The most obvious of the "distinctively regional interests" which the southern church was so anxious to protect concerned the control which it sought to maintain over racial segregation policies in Methodism in the south. Other distinct interests are more difficult to discover. It was the subject of race which spurred the southern leaders to desire protection for their rights as a minority, even though it was not always named as the basis for this concern. It was because of this that the commissioners eventually decided on jurisdictionally elected bishops who would oversee only annual conferences within their own jurisdiction. When the southern leaders spoke of protection of regional or minority interests, they meant the assurance that southern Methodists would not have to go against southern racial customs.

In pursuance of this concern some of the representatives of the southern church at first explored the possibility of setting up a separate organization for the Negro members of the Methodist Episcopal Church, and, when the northern delegates refused to hear of this arrangement, urged that Negroes should have a special jurisdiction with their own bishops limited to that jurisdiction. The northern commissioners argued strongly against any system of racial inequality in the united church ; but without some form of segregation being institutionalized in the union, the southern church could not accept the plan. Thus under such circumstances some kind of jurisdictional system was probably the only alternative to a complete failure of negotiations. In the plan which was finally approved, the two groups did their best to make room for both positions. The southerners' racial views were respected in the establishment of a separate jurisdiction for Negroes, and in the separation of powers between General and Jurisdictional Conferences, while the views of the northerners were recognized in the principles that the union would include Negro members and that no arbitrary limitation would be imposed on the number of Negro delegates to the General Conference. Thus neither side sacrificed what it then felt to be its *crucial* interests, and both were willing to adjust on what were seen as *peripheral* interests. For the south, the maintenance of segregation within the union was regarded as crucial, while for the north, once the principle of racial equality was granted, the crucial question was not segregation but the attainment of union. Once a solution acceptable to both sides was found on this main question of race, it was possible to settle other problems, such as changes in the office of bishop, and consolidation of the various administrative agencies of the three uniting churches, with relatively little difficulty.

The Present Significance of the Negotiations toward Union

Two issues demand some mention in the light of the negotiations leading to union. One is the question of the present status of the jurisdictional system, and the other is the possible significance of this union for further Methodist participation in ecumenical discussions.

1. Currently the Methodist Church is involved in a study of its jurisdictional system, and considerable disagreement has been evinced over the system's continued functioning within the church. The above account shows that this system was a compromise necessitated by the special concerns of the southern church — particularly those concerning race. It is clear from the constitution of the church that, if necessary, changes can be made. The central question, however, is not legal but political — can the jurisdictional system be abolished without undoing the union? The answer will still depend on how the self-conscious minorities within the Methodist Church interpret their crucial interests. As long as the racial concern remains central for southern white Methodists, so long will the jurisdictional system remain a compromise necessary to Methodist union. The attachment to the surrounding cultural pattern is so strong that southern Methodists are likely to change their views about race (and hence about the jurisdictional system) only when there is a change in the customs and values of the surrounding society with regard to racial segregation. The church can help to influence such a change in the surrounding society, but it can only be one, and not the strongest, of many converging influences.

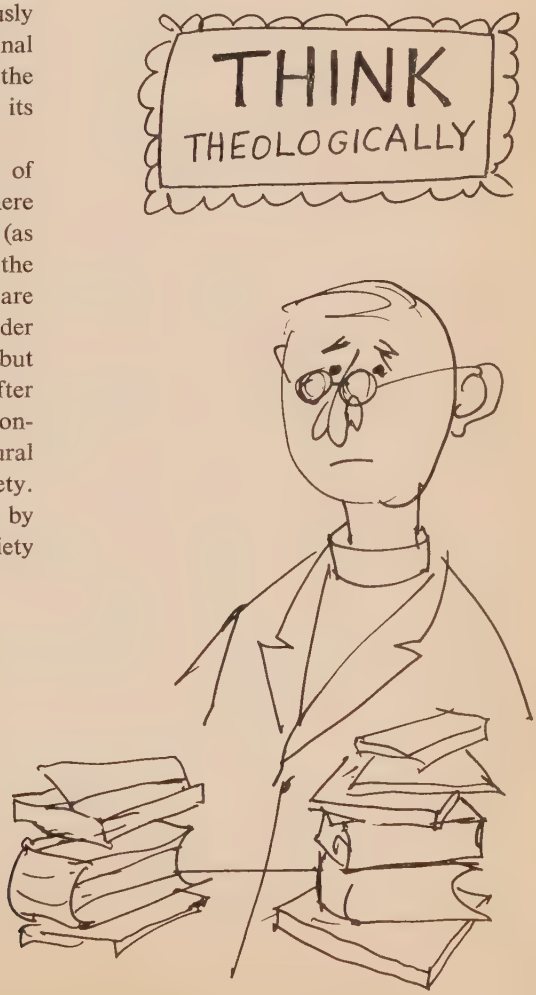
2. A prominent characteristic of the negotiations which brought about the union in 1939 was the persistence of all sides in seeking a solution, in spite of near-insurmountable difficulties. It is apparent, however, that while Methodists participate widely today in ecumenical discussions, and while the denomination continues to give official support to this participation, the church government gives the matter something less than the driving enthusiasm and close attention which it gave to the negotiations leading to Methodist union. In these negotiations leaders from all sides affirmed a common tradition, and reflected strongly the conviction that there was a common past to which they could turn to resolve their differences. The first requirement for fruitful conversation among communions is a sense of a shared past and some minimal degree of agreement on the interpretation of that past. Even where the leaders have that sense, they may find — as did the southern Methodists in the 1920's — that the rank and file of their membership does not share sufficiently in that tradition. As in that case, however, the sense of commonality and the convergence of understanding can be developed with the passage of time and through the efforts of church leaders.

Conclusion

Methodist union is significant for general ecumenical discussion for two primary reasons. First, it demonstrates some of the possibilities and limitations of union in the presence of certain kinds of institutional and cultural problems. In the second place, it suggests the varying ways in which minorities may pursue or sacrifice their institutional interests in the process of uniting.

In this case one minority was willing to sacrifice some of its distinctive interests, but that minority lacked the support of a wider culture in maintaining its distinctiveness. The other minority tenaciously defended its distinctive institutional interests and in so doing had the support of the wider society in its own geographical area.

A study of this single case of church union suggests that where institutional issues are central (as they were here), and where the conflicting institutional patterns are reflections of a cleavage in the wider society, union may be possible but may not bring full unity. Unity after union is likely to develop in the context of a greater degree of cultural integration in the wider society. The church is sharply affected by the level of integration of society around it.



Progress Report on the Study of the Anglican-Methodist Rapprochement

When the Faith and Order Study Commission on Institutionalism made the request that a project should be undertaken in England on institutional factors involved in Anglican-Methodist relations, those who were asked to execute the work were faced with the immediate problem of method. The easiest method was obviously that of the conference, and though the great value of this method was by no means underrated, it was felt by the group co-operating in the project that, for various reasons, it would be better to have papers prepared by individual members, each covering one particular aspect of the study. Thus, each contributor found himself working within clearly defined limits and having the opportunity to carry out research at his leisure if he so desired. Ideals are seldom realized in practice, and now that the papers have been gathered together it becomes apparent that nearly every contributor would have liked more time to have plumbed his subject to greater depths.

The Study Commission made the point that the would-be group of contributors ought to consist of an equal number of Anglican and Methodist members who should concentrate on institutional factors. The balance was fairly easy to achieve. However, as might be expected, in the long run the majority of contributors turned out to be historians. That their efforts are greatly appreciated hardly needs to be said. None the less, the relatively small place that is accorded to sociology in English universities was reflected in the difficulty in finding sociologists who were interested in applying their professional skills to a study of the churches. For the project this meant that the subjects selected do not fit into a neat and readily comprehensible pattern. Volunteers selected those topics they reckoned themselves best qualified to tackle, and some important problems have remained untouched. The experience of organizing such a study as this invites a preliminary conclusion: if any church is going to analyze institutional factors affecting its life, and to experiment in self-criticism, it must harness the services of those competent to study such factors, namely, sociologists and economists as well as historians.

Some brief notes are here offered on individual papers (soon to appear compositely in book form) so that it can be seen along what lines the group has been working.

In viewing the Anglican and Methodist churches within the setting of the general community, Dr. W. S. F. Pickering has endeavoured, with the aid of statistics, to delineate the extent and following of both churches over the past 50 years. While the approach has its own shortcomings, made abundantly visible by an insufficiency of relevant statistics, some of the findings might be repeated. It is probably common knowledge that the membership of the two churches has received serious blows over the past half-century. Judged by *active* church membership, both churches stand as minority groups within the country. Anglican Easter communicants today number little more than 5% of the total population, and Methodist membership at just under 700,000 represents 1.6% of the total population. Methodism is facing a severe crisis in the rural parts of England. Furthermore, there is a noticeable change in the institutional structure

of the Methodist Church. The classical system of society, class leader, local preacher and itinerant minister is becoming slightly more akin to the system associated with the Independent chapel or parish church.

Historians are by no means agreed on the factors relating to the emergence of the Methodist Church. To the Methodist, history is as important as it is to the Anglican, and the claims of the Methodist Church to be what it is in society inevitably rest on historical issues. A number of issues have been re-examined by four of the writers. Dr. Angus Buchanan in *Methodism and the Evangelical Revival : an Interpretation* places the growth of Methodism against the background of the industrial revolution, though he is reluctant to speak of Methodism as the church of that revolution. With the growth of the church in the nineteenth century there was a marked change in the classes of society which the church was able to influence, and with the passing of years there was a tendency for congregations to become more middle class. The Rev. R. E. Davies in considering *The Nature of Modern Methodism* points out that the differences between the Anglican and Methodist churches were greatly increased by the success of the Oxford Movement. He also outlines the development of Methodism in the twentieth century and traces the causes of the Methodist Union of 1932 and notes some of its failures. Concentrating on the single institution of the episcopacy during the past 150 years, Dr. J. H. S. Kent in his paper *Episcopacy in Church and Society* speaks first to Methodists, then to Anglicans. He shows how during the nineteenth century Anglican bishops took their pastoral duties more seriously than in previous times and were less involved in the affairs of the state. They failed however to maintain ecclesiastical discipline because of the determined policy of the Anglo-Catholics. With considerable force Dr. Kent attempts to prove, when speaking more directly to Anglicans, that "Methodism and Anglicanism are not just two churches more or less alike apart from a slight difference in the mode of ordination, but two religious bodies which may, from an institutional point of view, be said to have solved the problem of the provision of the *episkope* in different ways". He maintains that the religious pattern of Wesleyan societies rather than episcopacy was the biggest single cause of the final split between Anglicans and the followers of Wesley. Methodists and Anglican Evangelicals were divided not so much on questions of church order as on more basic theological issues, especially the notion of holiness. In this contribution Dr. Kent raises many important problems which tend to change the focus of contemporary thought on the subject of union. That the Church of England is established and the Methodist Church is not, may well be a factor of importance in the drawing together of the two churches. Despite the basic meaning of establishment, the institution itself underwent radical changes during the nineteenth century, and these Dr. G. F. A. Best explains in his paper *An Appraisal of Establishment* and shows that establishment is not so formidable and evil a beast as Nonconformists have often imagined it to be.

Problems of church unity at the level of the local parish church and chapel have not up to now been given sufficient attention. The Rev. Michael Jackson and Dr. Peter Mann in trying to remedy the situation jointly sponsored a survey in parts of an industrial city, *Anglican-Methodist Relations in Two Urban Parishes*. In this paper they sought to find out the attitudes of practising Anglicans and Methodists over the question of church union. While the survey was not extensive the findings are of much interest, for the people who were interviewed were drawn from areas where common ventures have been launched by Anglicans and Method-

ists. Jackson and Mann reached the conclusion that "theological differences did not on the whole weigh heavily on the minds of those active church members interviewed in considering relations with other denominations", except in the case of Anglo-Catholics and those Methodists who were opposed to them. They also noted that "to those interviewed the reunion of the two churches seemed an administrative and institutional problem rather than a theological one".

It is commonly believed that wide differences exist between the Anglican and Methodist churches in the matter of social teaching. The Methodists have always been associated with a puritanical ethic. The bishops of the Church of England, on the other hand, have never asked the laity to be rigorists in following the paths of temperance. The Rev. J. P. K. Byrnes in his paper clears up some misconceptions in these matters with special reference to drink and gambling. Differences are probably not as great as people imagine, especially with regard to current practice among church members, which Mr. Byrnes is careful to distinguish from official church teaching.

To those who may criticize these papers because of the possible failure to isolate institutional or sociological factors, it should be pointed out in defence that though such criticism is valid, the writers have attempted to broach new aspects of Anglican-Methodist rapprochement in the light of such factors. Even if they have not completely succeeded in their task they have begun to cut a pathway through fresh territory that has been opened up to them. They hope that what they have written will be a starting-point for discussion and further research both for those who have this particular approach at heart, as well as those who are eager to press the cause of union. They trust that future opportunities may present themselves by which their researches can be extended and their efforts strengthened by the co-operation of more helpers. Two fields which require more examination spring to mind instantly. First, that surveys similar to those conducted by Jackson and Mann should be extended to cover rural as well as other urban areas. What is desperately needed is an objective and accurate assessment of the nature and ethos of the two churches as they exist to-day. Second, that a thorough examination should be made of the 1932 Methodist Union. The only church in England which has experienced some form of reunion is the Methodist Church, and it seems strange that at a time like this the results of the union are virtually unknown.

In different ways and with varying degrees of stress each writer has made it abundantly clear that the problems involved in Anglican-Methodist rapprochement are much more complex than is sometimes held. It is very questionable, for example, if it is right to picture Methodism as approximating to the Evangelical Movement of the Church of England minus episcopacy. And if factors operating at the time of the split were many and complex, those which divide the churches at the present day are no less intricate. Institutional factors, even if they can be completely separated from theological motivations, still have to be mastered and still have to be erased, altered or intensified in order to bring about some form of union between the churches. In short, theological and institutional forces lie entangled in an almost unfathomable pattern. Sometimes one or two of the strands can be separated but the majority are difficult to unravel. Nevertheless, those who have contributed to the essays are convinced themselves, even if others are not, that what they have done has in some very small way furthered the process of unravelling rather than hindered it. By that claim they take their stand.

The Function and Control of Power in the Church in Relation to the Question of Unity and Disunity

RELIGIOUS unity can be hindered by many secular differences — by variations in culture, class, personality, language. Our concern is with the way in which the *power process* affects unity, although it is clear that the other factors are usually entangled with the question of power.

I

Three assumptions, and doubtless many others, are implicit in the material that follows: A greater amount of unity in religious activities would promote primary *shared* goals rather than secondary *differentiating* goals. By unity one cannot mean, in the modern world, uniformity. Unity means co-ordination among groups that are significantly different in many ways yet have a sense of overarching common concerns — in short, it means ecumenical thinking and planning.

The second assumption is methodological: To understand religious organizations, we must study their interdependence with the whole structure of society; they cannot be fully understood without reference to the political and economic institutions, the type and rigidity of the stratification system, the family and educational patterns, the extent of social change, and other aspects of social life. The methods and perspectives of social science are relevant to the analysis of religion and should be pursued without qualification so long as one is undertaking a social scientific study.

Thirdly, power is found in all human relations. It is *per se* neither good nor evil, but may be thought of as a motor, the influence of which is known only when its connection with a steering mechanism is known. The word power often carries mild or even strong negative connotations, usually by association with highly coercive, violent or concentrated forms of power. We shall use it as a neutral term.

We shall need to be alert to the ways in which the question of power is different in an organization whose goals are unambiguous (there is only the problem of the technical efficiency of means) from what it is in an organization whose goals

themselves are constantly under debate. Many a World Council of Churches conference and paper has sought to answer the question : "What is the nature of the unity we seek ?" Clearly the function and control of power in such an organization are different from what they are in an organization with relatively more sharply defined goals (for example, the National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People). One should not forget of course that latent, undefined goals may complicate the situation in groups that seem to be entirely unified in aim.

The problem of ambiguity of goals can be put in another way : Religious organizations are used, both intentionally and unintentionally, in the pursuit of goals other than religious ones. This is true both for the laymen who support and the professionals who lead. Ecumenism is undoubtedly affected by the non-religious functions that churches serve for individuals and groups. The wide variation in the forms of religious organization and practice that appeal to different individuals and groups is indicative — among other things — of the differences in secular needs and tendencies. One need only mention the names of Ernst Troeltsch and Richard Niebuhr to suggest the importance of the problem of the way in which religious unity and disunity are affected by secular unity and disunity. There is a wealth of research to indicate that differences in class and race, in nationality, in personality, in position in the economic and political system, and many other aspects of secular society influence the type of religious group one will support. No clear line can be drawn between a religious and a non-religious use of a religious organization ; but it is certain that failure to recognize the extent to which men invest many different kinds of hopes in their religious groups will lead to inadequate understanding of our topic.

II

In the analysis of power, it is well to note that different questions arise at different stages in the life of an organization. There is likely to be a shift in the nature of leadership, growth in the complexity of the structure of the organization, and changes in the pattern of interaction with other groups. Each of these affects the power situation.

In its early years, an organization may be led by persons who are opposed to some aspects of the prevailing structure. A major leader of a new movement "preaches, creates, or demands *new* obligations", as Weber put it. But whether or not there are major or minor prophets, with an abundance of charisma, there will be persons moved by an exciting vision of something better, as they see it. Their task is not to operate an organization, but to build one. To the degree that they succeed, however, they change the nature of the leadership likely to be found and needed in the organization. A staff is assembled to keep records, to carry on the functions that have been set in motion, and to keep the organization vigorous.

The job conceptions of this "second generation" of leaders tend to be different from those of the first generation. They feel themselves identified not so much with the problem or task for which the group was first formed, but with the

organization itself. They are also more likely to be concerned with orderly careers for themselves, with the preservation of their power (which usually requires the maintenance of the structure of the organization), with the maintenance of appropriate status positions.

We are referring here to what is usually called "goal displacement", the deflection of effort from the original purpose. Philip Selznick calls this "the organizational paradox" and notes how often the aims of a group are frustrated by its appearance. The dedication and enthusiasm of the founders does not hold up, there is a "routinization of charisma" in Weber's terms, as attention is shifted from the original goals to the organization that has been set up presumably to achieve those goals. It is one thing, for example, to be dedicated to ecumenical work, it is another thing to be dedicated to the World Council of Churches — and in the shift, the original purpose may get absorbed into many diverse interests related to the organization, and may be partly obscured, changed, even contradicted by these diverse interests.

Sills well describes the problem of goal preservation in these words :

> "In order to accomplish their goals, organizations establish a set of procedures, or means. In the course of following these procedures, however, the subordinates or members to whom authority and functions have been delegated often come to regard them as ends in themselves, rather than as means toward the achievement of organization goals. As a result of this process, the actual activities of the organization become centered around the proper functioning of organization procedures, rather than upon the achievement of the initial goals." (David L. Sills, *The Volunteers*, The Free Press, 1957, p. 62.)

There is no reason to suppose that religious organizations are not affected by this process of a shift from "charismatic" to "bureaucratic" leadership — to put the matter in excessively sharp terms. In a relatively young organization like the World Council, there is likely to be far more concern with problems of defining goals than there is with deflection from goals. But this may not long be true. Religious groups often resist the implication that their staffs are concerned with orderly career patterns, with status, with power. Failure to recognize these interests complicates the problem of deflection rather than eliminating it. Some of the difficulties encountered in getting co-operation among established religious groups, however they may be explained by reference to differences in principle, often indicate an attachment to procedure.

The question of shift in type of leadership as an organization grows in size and complexity is part of a series of questions that the student of power must ask concerning leadership. From what sources are the leaders of an organization drawn, and with what results ? Put in another way, which churches will most vigorously back their men in the work of interdenominational groups ? This should be seen as one case of a general question : What social conditions select leaders who are narrow or broad in their concerns ? A "politically ecumenical leader" (if I may use this awkward phrase) at the head of Egypt today is difficult

to imagine. The poverty, the powerlessness, the lack of information of the great majority of Egyptians inevitably narrow the goals of their leaders and impose severe limits on the kinds of policies they can pursue and still remain in power. It would be highly desirable to explore the ways in which the constituencies of religious leaders affect the kinds of goals they may pursue.

III

The location of power varies among different types of social structure. Loosely federated organizations (doubtless the World Council would be placed in this classification) have advantages and disadvantages in the accomplishment of their goals when compared with unified organizations. Churches that are structurally separate from the state gain some kinds of influence and lose other kinds. Agencies (religious or otherwise) that succeed in expanding their influence may find they have paid a price in deflection from their goals. Let us examine some of the issues involved in these statements.

David Truman argues (see *The Government Process*, 1951) that federated organizations are less able to influence the course of government — are less powerful — than unified or corporate type organizations. The former cannot so easily present a united front. This is especially true when the units in the federation preceded it historically. Such a situation is true of contemporary ecumenical organizations which, by the fact of their federated quality, speak with less direct influence. On the other hand, unified organizations often restrict policy discussion, allow less room for new ideas and growth of policy, work less easily with other organizations with whom they might share some interest. These points may be illustrated by noting that the United Nations, a federated body, is unable to take various kinds of action today, because of the "sovereignty" of its constituent parts. Yet most persons would agree that it could be unified only by suppressing some of the diverse elements now within it, thus defeating many of its major purposes.

Whatever their advantages and weaknesses, federated organizations frequently move toward more consolidated types. It is perhaps too much to say that federated organizations are inherently unstable and short-lived. It is certainly true, however, that wherever they seek influence beyond their own internal affairs, they exhibit a tendency toward a unified or corporate structure. Unless those empowered to make decisions can act definitively, when vital questions arise, they may lose opportunities to answer those questions in ways satisfactory to the organization. To put the matter in overly-simple terms: under many circumstances, a federated, loosely-knit organization maintains greater flexibility, allows more of its constituent elements to express themselves — but is often unable to arrive at a policy, or if it achieves a policy, is relatively unable to act upon it. A unified organization, on the other hand, can achieve and act upon policy — but at the cost of power concentration.

There are two aspects to this power dilemma. One deals with the way in which an organization is related to other groups; the other is concerned with the

distribution of power within the organization. Let us examine each of these briefly in terms of general principles, and then make some application to churches.

As an organization seeks to broaden its influence, it usually must win the support of other agencies and persons who are only partly in agreement with its aims. There are times when a group must try to neutralize the influence of some power that is strongly opposed to its programme. For example, the Tennessee Valley Authority, dedicated to the unified planning of a region, found in the area other agencies with which it had to deal. Farmer organizations, state governments, private business interests, etc., had their own ideas and interests on many of the same subjects with which the Tennessee Valley Authority was concerned. The TVA could not simply disregard them and expect to be effective, for these groups possessed economic and political power. Instead, the staff of the TVA sought to involve as many as possible of the existing groups in the planning and execution of its own programme — to co-opt them, to win their support.

Applications of the principle of co-optation abound in the history of religious organizations. One thinks immediately of Troeltsch's well-known remark concerning the church : "It dominates the world and is therefore dominated by the world".

If failure to win the support of powerful secular organizations means relative powerlessness and if the effort to win their support runs the danger of co-optation, religious organizations face a serious dilemma. The problem is to find a way to be simultaneously in politics (thus to influence it) and beyond politics (thus free to challenge it).

If these remarks seem, at the moment, to be far removed from the problems of the World Council of Churches, they may nevertheless bear on problems of the future. As the World Council moves down the road from unity at the conference level, to more and more firm pronouncements on Christian positions with respect to crucial issues, to efforts to procure action on these issues, the problem of power will become more difficult. To get the action desired will require the co-operation of other agencies and persons with a wide range of values. To win the support of nations, of universities, of labour unions will be to run the risk of having the Council's goals sharply redefined. To fail to try to win their support will be to give up the task of accomplishing certain goals.

IV

The second aspect of the power dilemma concerns the distribution of power within an organization. As the structure of a group becomes more complex, there is a tendency, under many conditions, for the majority to lose influence to a small core of individuals who manage the organization. For some purposes, this development may be of little importance ; there may be little need for mass participation ; expert knowledge and action are all that is required. "Salvation" from malaria can be achieved by the efforts of a small number of research scientists, doctors, drug manufacturers and pilots. This is not true of religious organizations : to accomplish their goals ordinarily requires the active co-operation of the whole range of the membership. We must ask, therefore, what conditions

keep the largest number of individuals personally involved in the pursuit of the goals of an organization ; what conditions lead to membership apathy ?

There is an extensive literature on this subject, ranging from the overly-hasty generalization of Pareto, Mosca, Michels and others concerning an "iron law of oligarchy". (The phrase comes from Michels and is used with reference to political parties.) Weber's work on bureaucracy is more carefully grounded in empirical study, but it also tends to describe a process that occurs under some conditions as if it were "iron law". More recently, detailed examination of power location within specific organizations by Gouldner (*Patterns of Industrial Bureaucracy*, 1954), by Lipsit, Trow and Coleman (*Union Democracy*, 1956), by Sills (*The Volunteers*, 1957), and others is beginning to build more adequate conceptions.

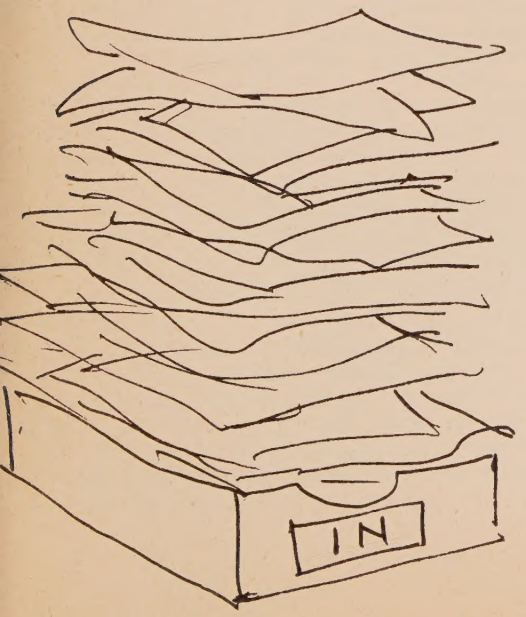
Lipsit, Trow and Coleman, for example, ask the classic questions : Under what conditions is democracy possible ? Their primary concern is with labour unions, but they offer evidence that has broader applicability. A group with a large middle class with approximately equal income can resist oligarchic tendencies, as Aristotle taught us. It is perhaps also true that diffused power is more characteristic of small groups. But the two principles alone are not adequate, for both large and heterogeneous groups may be democratic. The principle of pluralism is also important : democracy is possible where organized sub-groups (none with majority power) compete in a context of mutual tolerance and with some sense of common identity with the whole group.

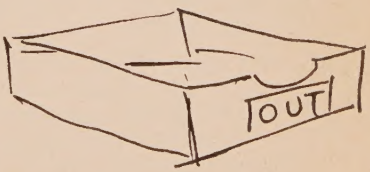
There is widespread agreement on the proposition that as organizations grow in size, the need for functionally specialized roles, in membership heterogeneity, there is increased likelihood that power will be concentrated in fewer hands (see Sills, 1957). There is no reason to suppose that religious organizations are free from these influences. Policy-making is likely to be "delegated upward" — to national or international conventions, composed of those persons most concerned with the problem in hand. But many kinds of action are of necessity "delegated downward", to local churches and individuals. Difficult as it is to get agreement on broad principles on the national and international level, it often proves even more difficult to get action on the local level. The individuals who must carry out the action are often less concerned. But even where they are deeply interested in the issue, they find themselves surrounded by a different set of forces from those that influenced the policy-makers. The persons with whom they work are often more closely identified with their job, their family, their class and region, their nation, than they are with their church — and these various groups may well make conflicting demands. It is a common thing in the United States to read of the support given by a national or even a southern regional church conference calling for support of the Supreme Court ruling on school desegregation. It is a very uncommon thing to hear of a local church taking such a stand in the area where the issue is controversial. The kinds of forces acting upon local church leaders are clearly different in some ways from those acting upon leaders of regional, national and international groups. In technical terms, their "reference groups" are different.

It would seem that this question of the "flow of power" — from the individual and local group upward to the international organization, and from that body downward to the local situation again must be of great importance to the World Council. The identification of the conditions that promote control of an organization by an active minority and those that keep a large proportion of the membership involved require a continuing study. The active minority may win many "paper victories", because it overlooks the apathy or opposition of the majority. One may come away from a conference feeling exhilarated by the agreements reached (often painfully), only to discover that one has been misled by what Robert Merton has called "the fallacy of group soliloquy" — the feeling of unanimity reached by a small minority unmindful of their relative isolation.

V

This paper has tried to suggest that the study of power in the church can be informed by the application of the concepts of social science and has been more concerned with general principles than with their application to religious organizations. The study of actual power structures within churches and the presence or absence of mediating and conciliating techniques between churches can be done by various persons qualified to do this. The main point is that the church cannot escape the dilemmas of power. And in its efforts to reduce their sharpness, it may be more successful by approaching its problems indirectly, than by direct confrontation of other powers. That is, the efforts of religious organizations might best be directed toward the creation of conditions within which decisions in harmony with their goals will most readily be made by individuals and groups acting in their various social roles.





The Church as Koinonia and Institution

One of the major issues at the 1959 meeting of Study Commission on Institutionalism at Tutzing, Germany, was the relation between the sociological and theological approach to the institution of the Church. The discussion was based on papers by Dr. James Gustafson of Yale and Dr. Hans Dombois of Heidelberg. Dr. Dombois' paper, "The Church as Koinonia and Institution" was based upon a Dutch Report of April 1959, which was a summary of the discussions held by the Commission on Faith and Order of the Ecumenical Council of Churches of the Netherlands. Dr. Dombois presented primarily the theological-juridical approach, developing the dialectic between the personal and trans-personal elements in the Church and in defining institution he stressed the primacy of "personal action". On the other hand, Dr. Gustafson in his paper "The Church as Community and Institution" followed more closely the sociological methodology adopted by the Study Commission on Institutionalism in its two North American meetings.

As a consequence of the discussion of the basic issues which this dialogue aroused it was necessary once again to seek a consensus on the nature, scope and method of the Commission. The following paragraphs embody the substance of the understanding which the Commission achieved in its session at Tutzing.

The study of the Commission has two aspects which are complementary: a theological and a sociological approach. The Church is at one and the same time God's creation and a human institution. This fact tends to ambiguities in the use of the term "institution". It is used in a theological-legal sense as a result of the divine activity, and in a sociological sense, special attention being given to the institutionalizing factors (agencies) of modern society. The purpose of such a study is to help the churches to understand their own structure sociologically as well as theologically. Such self-criticism can help the churches to "unmask" and overcome some of the barriers to Christian unity.

The theological and sociological structures of church life are not only complementary, they are interwoven and often inseparable. They can be distinguished for purposes of analysis and enquiry, but they cannot be strictly compartmentalized. The deeply personal reality of the Church possesses as part of its very life such divinely instituted factors as baptism, eucharist, word, ministry and faith. These theological institutions develop of necessity certain social structures in the visible Church and become articulated in historical forms which develop as the intention and task of the Church are socialized by various agents and factors in its environment.

The social structures of the Church make possible the preservation of the Church in history and are the instruments through which the functions of the Church are performed, along with the personal agents such as leaders and members. Thus we must recognize that both personal and transpersonal, theological and sociological factors are simultaneously active, operating at different levels. The socialization of the Church as an institution reflects both the inner development of the specifically theological reality of its divinely instituted life, and also

the interaction of this inner development with the larger forces of society which surround it. These environing forces have, of course, their own theological significance.

From the sociological perspective the visible forms of the theologically instituted structures (such as baptism, eucharist, ministry and word) have a history which can be often clearly traced in earlier cultural elements, but the distinctly Christian meaning and reality of these personal actions and responses between God and man are not negated thereby. At the same time, it must be recognized that once the visible social structures have emerged they may, and often do, develop relatively autonomous forces of their own. These structures may in this development interfere with the original or normative task and goal of the Church. They may become obsolescent or otherwise inadequate. The Commission is concerned with the institutional forms and patterns which enhance the mission and unity of the churches as well as those which tend to become barriers to the manifestation of the Church's true unity in Christ.

When the Commission has tackled the complex reality of institutional structures, it has recognized a baffling and confusing situation. The Commission has selected the limited areas of institutional structures ordinarily involved in the government, polity, administration, bureaucracy, patterns of organizational power and decision-making for the focus of its study. In so delimiting its task the Commission has been constantly aware of three poles of tension which are present in the church situation of the present time : (1) the relation of the Church as *koinonia* or community, theologically conceived, and the Church as a social institution ; (2) the interaction among the many social, political, economic and cultural factors which are not specifically studied and those which are here called the organizational structure of the Church ; and (3) the fact that the variables which form an important institutional complex in one ecumenical situation may be quite different from those which are primarily operative in another.

In seeking to make a sociological analysis of institutional factors in ecumenical negotiations, the Commission has stimulated some studies which are much broader than what it has defined as its primary task. Since these are not now being undertaken elsewhere under Faith and Order, we can only regard them with appreciation and gratitude. Some of these studies remind the Commission that patterns of organizational efficiency and power, for example, may not be as relevant for the full understanding of ecumenical relations as patterns of worship, ministry and the like.

At the present stage of its work the Commission must, accordingly, constantly re-emphasize the specific focus of the tasks which Faith and Order has given it, but must not do its sociological study so rigidly as to make the work static or sterile. As the Commission pointed out in 1958 its procedures will deal methodologically with structures, functions and dynamic factors. A certain ambiguity, therefore, attends its assignment. This ambiguity arises not only from the terms which are used, the methods employed, but also from the objects which are under investigation, as was indicated above. In this situation the ambiguity reflects also the varying interests, concerns perspectives and convictions of the members of the Committee. Despite these difficulties the Commission is encouraged by the progress which has been made in exploring basic issues of the relation of the sociology of the Church to theology and the case studies which have been completed.

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